



Louisiana Streamlining Commission

Department of Conservation

September 17, 2009

Preamble:

The reports that we at Mercatus have read to date suggest some ideas for re-organization in core government departments. These are ideas that may be useful to the Commission in its work.

Rational:

This recommendation is based on the concept of having a strong independent voice for environmental quality through the Department of Environmental Quality and a separate organization for implementing those quality standards. The operational organization will need to achieve the appropriate balance between conservation and use while achieving the environmental values set by government through the Department of Environmental Quality. To achieve consistency in resource use and conservation, our proposal seeks to merge all of those activities currently involved in conservation actions and resource use consent under the same department roof. Some like the Commission for Coastal Restoration would maintain their statutory independence but would receive logistical support from the department. We would also expect to achieve substantial operational efficiency gains.

New Department of Conservation:

- The new Department of Conservation would be formed around the existing Department of Natural Resources as the core of the new department.
- The Commission on Coastal Restoration would be incorporated into the new department for resources and support services but would retain its statutory independence for operational matters.
- The water and soil conservation activities currently in the Department of Agriculture would be transferred to the new department.
- The Wildlife function of Wildlife and Fisheries would go to the new department.
- The function of Fisheries would transfer to Agriculture, creating a Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Given the commercial fishery operations in the state and the growth in aquaculture, this seems to be a more logical structure.
- All other environment related conservation activities would also transfer to the new department.

Implementation:

This is clearly a major undertaking and I do not believe that the Commission has the time or the expertise to develop an implementation plan or to identify all the changes to law necessary to put into effect the re-organization before the reporting date of

December 15th 2009. The development of the appropriate plans should be the result of a full scoping study of all the issues and carried out by people with the proven capability to accomplish this scale of re-organization. This would likely require the letting of a private sector contract for this work.

Potential Recommendation: (Suggested wording only)

- The Streamlining Commission recommends the creation of a new Department of Conservation from the functions referred to above. The mission of the new organization would be to conserve the natural resources of the State of Louisiana while allowing resource use consistent with government policy.